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SC VERDICT TODAY ON SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

10 days of marathon hearing by a five-judge Constitution bench before SC reserved its verdict on the pleas

- Petitioners want India to treat the LGBTQ community as equal citizens under the Constitution

CENTRE'S POSITION

Centre had told the Supreme Court that any constitutional declaration made by it on the petitions seeking legal validation for same-sex marriage may not be a "correct course of action"

STAND OF STATES

The Centre had also told the court that the Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and Assam govts had opposed the petition seeking legal endorsement for same-sex marriage

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EXPRESS READ

Bommai undergoes bypass surgery

BENGALURU: Former CM Basavaraj Bommai underwent a bypass surgery in a city hospital around 6 am on Monday. Bommai was shifted to ICU after the six-hour procedure. He was diagnosed with a heart issue sometime ago and advised to undergo a surgery, sources said. Bommai, who also suffers from knee-related issues, has been advised surgery for the same | P4

Govt to get 1,100 MW more power in 3 days

BENGALURU: In a bid to address the immediate demand for power, energy companies will get additional 1,100 MW power from private power generators in another three days. The state government has invoked Section 11 of the Electricity Act to procure power from the private power generators. Energy Minister KJ George said the government is also purchasing power from the grid to meet rising demand | P4

Capital punishment quashed in Nithari serial killing case

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

IN a major turnaround, the prime accused in the Nithari serial killing case, Surinder Koli, and his employer Moninder Singh Pandher, both facing capital punishment, were acquitted by the Allahabad High Court on Monday. A Ghaziabad trial court had sentenced Koli to death in 12 cases related to serial killings, which had come to light in Noida in 2005-2006. Pandher was awarded death sentence in two cases.

But the high court exonerated Koli in all 12 cases and acquitted Pandher in both the cases. As such, all death sentences stand cancelled. Koli's capital punishment in a different case was earlier commuted to life, and so he will continue to serve the term. As for Pandher, he can walk free.

Moninder Pandher

Surinder Koli

The HC bench observed that the investigation into the case was botched up and basic norms of collecting evidence were brazenly violated. "It appears to us that the investigation opted for the easy course of implicating a poor servant of the house by demonizing him, without taking due care of probing more serious aspects of possible involvement of organized activity of organ trading," said the judges.

The case involving a series of kidnappings, murders, alleged rapes, cannibalism and destruction of evidence had left the nation stunned in 2006. The CBI filed chargesheets in 16 of them. In three FIRs, chargesheets weren't filed because the "offence couldn't be ascertained", said sources.

Israel pulverises Gaza; SOS call by WHO to expedite aid

24 hrs left for aid to come in before real catastrophe strikes, warns world body

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

AHEAD of its planned ground invasion into the Gaza Strip, Israeli forces on Monday stepped up air strikes to destroy possible Hamas targets. A number of buildings were flattened, killing and seriously injuring those present there. The Israeli Air Force claimed an airstrike in Khan Younis area killed Hamas' intelligence chief.

The delay in ground assault is partly attributed to inclement weather, while reports say Israel is under pressure to avoid civilian casualties. US President Joe Biden has warned that any move to occupy Gaza would be a "big mistake".

The total casualties in the conflict that broke out on October 7 have gone past 4,000, while the number of injured is well over 13,000. According to Israel, Hamas is keeping 199 people as hostages, whose whereabouts remain unknown.

UN officials say over one million people have been displaced after Israel ordered evacuation of northern Gaza. As the conflict entered the 10th day, the ground situation in Gaza remained extremely grim with the World Health Organization (WHO) warning of "a real catastrophe" if aid doesn't reach the bombarded, besieged enclave in 24 hours. According to reports, residents in Gaza are going through untold misery. With taps running dry, even everyday functions such as going to the toilet, showering, and washing clothes have become impossible for the locals.

As food, water and medicine supplies have stopped, all eyes are on the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, where trucks carrying basic aid are waiting. Egypt has agreed to open up the border but Israel is reportedly unrelenting.

Hospitals in the enclave are on the verge of collapse. Some 20 hospitals in northern Gaza are treating 2,000 patients, some of them on ventilators, AFP reported quoting WHO regional director Ahmed al-Mandhari. If assistance does not arrive, doctors will have to "prepare death certificates for their patients," he said. P12

A Palestinian boy walks down the stairs of a destroyed building after an Israeli airstrike in Rafah in southern Gaza Strip on Monday | AFP

KNESSET SESSION DISRUPTED

Israel's Parliament session was disrupted on Monday after Hamas fired a "barrage of rockets" at Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, sending lawmakers to bomb shelters

TOTAL TOLL GOES PAST 4,000

According to the Gaza Health Ministry, 2,750 Palestinians have been killed and 9,700 wounded. More than 1,400 Israelis have been killed, and over 300 have been injured in the conflict so far

GAMES ON

It's official, cricket part of 2028 Olympics

INDRANEEL DAS @ Mumbai

WHILE following the presentation on the giant screen in the media centre of the IOC Session here on Monday, it seemed that the inclusion of cricket in Olympics was inevitable. The session in Mumbai, the ODI World Cup being played in India and of course, a couple of days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi pitched hosting the 2036 Olympics, the most popular sport of the country found its way into the LA28 calendar.

Stars were aligned but so were the tenets critical in the selection process. Inclusivity, gender equality and popularity were some of the ingredients that went into making cricket part of LA28. The organising committee, too, had been highlighting these aspects in its rationale for including five sports — cricket, baseball and softball, lacrosse, squash and flag football — in the 2028 Games.

As LA28 sports director Niccolo Campriani, one of the presenters at the Jio World Convention Centre, succinctly put it, cricket has 2.5 billion fans worldwide. "The commitment in cricket is real and expanding with the launch of Major Cricket League this year, which exceeded all expectations," he said. His emphasis was on the digital presence of the sport and gave the example of Virat Kohli's followers on the digital platform.

The IOC said there will be six teams in the men and women's sections and the selection process of teams from different regions will be decided later.

Inclusion of squash remained a side dish on Monday.

Four drive 80km, unaware of king cobra below car boot

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @ Jagalpet (Uttara Kannada)

FOUR cousins had the shock of their lives when they realised that a 10-foot long king cobra travelled with them in their car, at Jagalpet in Joida taluk of Uttara Kannada district on Sunday.

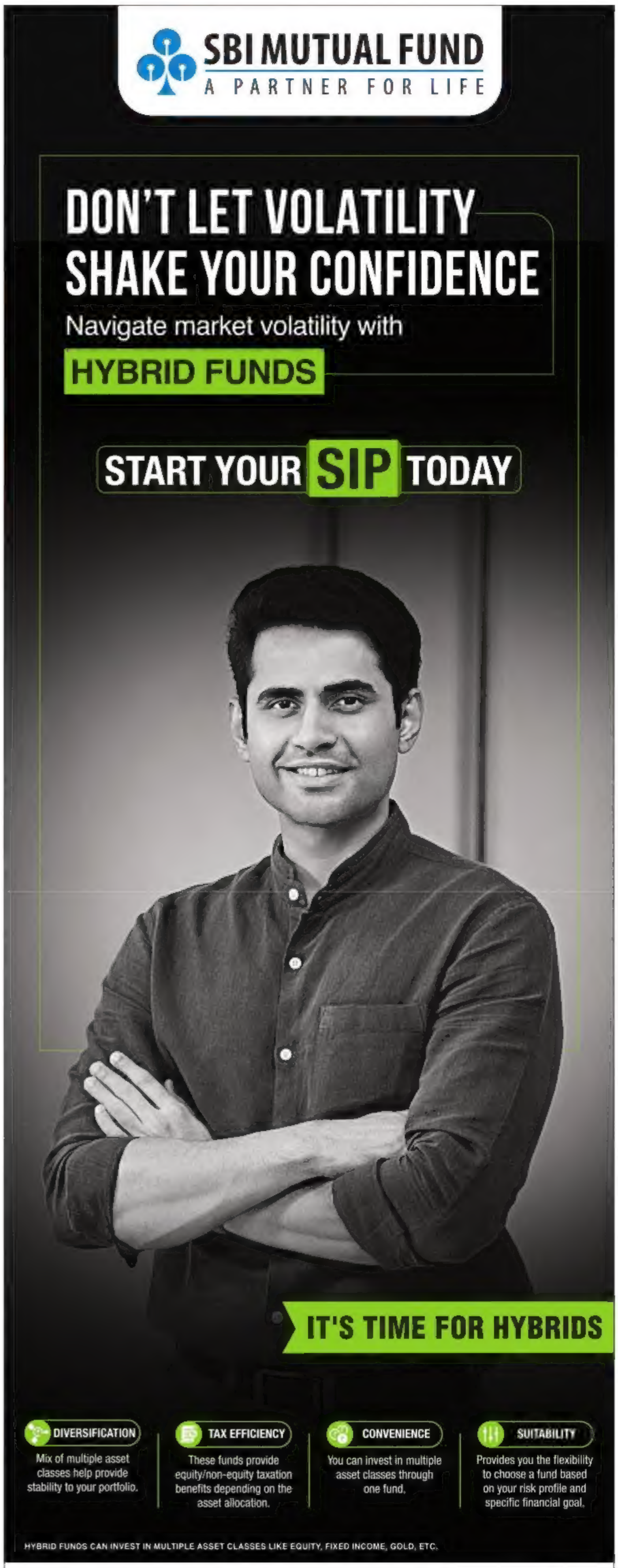
Babu Ganapathi (name changed) and his cousins from Kandewadi near Castle Rock-Dudhsagar region of Goa left home in the morning for their relatives house at Mest Biroda village near Jagalpet.

A snake rescuer pulls the king cobra from the car

They stopped their car for the darshan of Lord Dattatreya near Jagalpet, which is about 80km from Kandewadi. Even then, they did not realise that a stranger was travelling with them. Nor did the stranger alert them about his presence below the boot.

After reaching their destination, Ganapathi and his cousins alighted from the car leaving the doors open. When they were busy exchanging pleasantries with their relatives and friends, a cat started sniffing and meowing around the car.

CONTINUED ON: P3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